



STEPS TO BAR ADMISSION IN TEXAS

TEXAS BOARD OF LAW EXAMINERS

2023



BOARD OF LAW EXAMINERS

Supreme Court of Texas

- The Board of Law Examiners is a judicial agency under the authority of the Supreme Court of Texas and investigates the character and fitness of all applicants on behalf of the Court.
- The Supreme Court of Texas certifies all applicants for admission to the Bar.
- The law requires filing of a Declaration to initiate investigation of applicants.

DON'T DELAY!

- The purpose of the Declaration is to provide you with early notice of issues and concerns that need to be evaluated and possibly corrected to remove impediments to licensure.
- **REGULAR FILING FEE: \$190**
- **ADDITIONAL LATE FEE: \$150**

Payments are accepted online by credit card or e-check.

- The latest you could file a Declaration is concurrently with your bar application, but this could delay your licensure.

ADMISSION TO THE BAR IS A TWO-STEP PROCESS

- **Declaration of Intention to Study Law**
 - October 1 deadline (fall)
 - May 1 deadline (spring)
 - June 1 deadline (spring quarter hour)
 - September 15 deadline (summer entrants)
 - Within 60 days of matriculation (if transferring from an out-of-state school.)
- **Application for Bar Examination**
 - February 2026 application due September 1, 2025 (to avoid late fee.)
 - July 2026 application due February 1, 2026 (to avoid late fee.)
 - UBE transfer application.

<https://www.ble.texas.gov>

- **Visit the BLE website for more information specific to Character & Fitness**
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Application Forms
- Rules and Policies
- Character & Fitness
- Hearings Procedures
- A copy of this presentation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- All Board of Law Examiners' records and proceedings regarding character and fitness are CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC and CONFIDENTIAL.
- Three exceptions are listed in Rule 1(e):
 - 1. Upon written authority of a Declarant;
 - 2. In response to a valid subpoena from a court of competent jurisdiction.
 - 3. To the Office of Chief Disciplinary Counsel of the State Bar of Texas, or the Texas Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee.

ATLAS ACCOUNT REQUIRED

- ATLAS is the application processing system for the Board of Law Examiners. Every student filing a Declaration is required to create an ATLAS account on the Board's website.
- Record your username and password for future use.
- Submit your Declaration and pay online.
- Your ATLAS account will be the primary way the Board communicates with you from filing your Declaration until you receive your Bar Exam results and licensing information.
 - **Add noreply@ble.texas.gov as a safe sender.**

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

You must submit the following documents with your Declaration.

- ❖ Authorization and Release form
- ❖ Law school application with all attachments.
- ❖ Any other documents required by the disclosures you make on your Declaration.
- ❖ You must additionally complete a mandatory fingerprint check. www.ble.texas.gov/fingerprint-information

Checklist for Declaration of Intention to Study Law for Texas Law Students

This checklist is for your convenience. Do not upload it. It is not a substitute for reading and complying with the [Rules Governing Admission to the Bar of Texas](#).

To submit your declaration

- Instructions** – Read. When you are done, a green checkmark will appear.
- Declaration** – Complete. When you are done, a green checkmark will appear.
- Authorization and Release** – Complete, then upload through the Upload Required Documents feature.
- Submit Application and Pay Fees by the Deadline** – Once you have completed each step above, a green Submit button will appear. Click it and follow the prompts to submit fees.

Required for Character & Fitness Investigation

- Fingerprints** – Complete the [fingerprinting process](#).
- Law School Application** – For each law school you attended within the last 5 years seeking a JD or other law degree, upload your law school application through the Upload Required Documents feature. (If you transferred law schools since you filed your Declaration of Intention to Study Law, upload your transfer law school application.)
- Additional Information & Updates** – Depending how you answered certain questions in your application, you may need to upload additional required documents. Review the Upload Required Documents page and upload all required documentation. If Board staff requests additional information or documents, immediately provide such information. You are obligated to amend your declaration as needed so that your responses remain full, frank, true, and correct.

To complete the processing of your declaration

- Character and Fitness Approval** – The Board has 270 days to complete its character and fitness investigation. For more information, please see our [Character & Fitness page](#).

This checklist is for your convenience. Do not upload it.

DECLARATION CHECKLIST

YOUR ATLAS HOMEPAGE - MESSAGES

- Once you submit your Declaration, your file will be assigned to an analyst. Your analyst's name will appear in the bottom section of your ATLAS homepage.
 - Use the blue "Create Message" button to send messages to your analyst with questions.
- **Example:**
 - ANALYST
 - Your analyst is (first name)
[Create Message](#)

YOUR ATLAS HOMEPAGE – MISSING ITEMS

- Your analyst will send you notices of any missing items with specific deadlines. They will appear on the right side of your homepage. Once you submit the missing item and the analyst has reviewed it, the item will be marked "Completed/Closed."
- **REQUEST MORE TIME TO PROVIDE DOCUMENTS IF NEEDED.**

Example:

- **MISSING ITEMS**
- *Fingerprinting Requirement -*
- **[Completed/Closed]**

STATUS LETTERS

May 16, 2023

Dear First Name Last Name:

We are processing your Declaration of Intention to Study Law and we are working to complete it as soon as possible. Our character and fitness investigation can take up to 270 days.

This letter shows the status of your Declaration as of May 16, 2023. We will send an updated Status Letter within 60 days.

Declaration Requirements

- **Fingerprint results received: No.**

Visit <https://ble.texas.gov/fingerprint-information>. You will need the following information to register with Identogo:

- Texas Board of Law Examiners Service Code:
- ORI:

- **Law school application received or not required: No.**

For each law school you attended within the past five years, order your law school application from your law school registrar or obtain it from your LSAC.org account. Then use the Upload Required Documents feature on your ATLAS User Home page to upload it to your ATLAS account.

In addition, please review the "Missing Items" section on your ATLAS User Home page for any other documents or information your Analyst may need to complete our investigation.

Please note that once you upload a requested item, amend your application, or send a message:

- Your Analyst is automatically alerted
- Your item is automatically stamped with the date and time of submission
- Your Analyst needs some time to review the item before we can mark it as completed or otherwise respond
- You can view all the items you have uploaded in the "Uploaded Documents" box on your ATLAS User Home page

Please do not send multiple messages through ATLAS or emails to the general BLE email requesting the status of an item. This only slows down our response time. We will notify you via your ATLAS account if we need anything from you.

Please do not upload the same document multiple times.

We recommend that you log into your ATLAS account regularly (at least once per month) to review any "Missing Item" notifications, Admission Documents, and messages from your Analyst.

Your assistance and cooperation with our investigation are very important.

READ THE INSTRUCTIONS

- You can message your analyst through ATLAS once you submit your Declaration. If you have questions about completing it before submission, review the FAQs on our website, or contact the Board of Law Examiners at Information@ble.texas.gov.
- Don't rely on other law students for advice.
- Fully disclose everything.
- Do not omit negative information.
- Demonstrate honesty in the application process to avoid creating additional issues.
- Don't minimize, mischaracterize, or misrepresent the facts, no matter how embarrassing it may be.

GOOD MORAL CHARACTER

- Our investigation is an assessment of character traits that are likely to result in injury to future clients, obstruct the administration of justice, or violate the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct.
- [TEXAS DISCIPLINARY RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT](#)
- These traits often involve dishonesty or a lack of trustworthiness in carrying out responsibilities.

WHAT MUST BE DISCLOSED?

Requires detailed information about:

- College attendance (any and all)
- Law school attendance (any and all)
- Employment history (within the last 10 years, or since your 18th birthday, whichever period is shorter.) Internships/externships should also be disclosed.
- Residence history (any cities/states/countries where you have resided, worked, or attended school within the last 10 years.) Do not leave gaps and be sure to include all residence history up to the time you submit your Declaration.
- Professional licenses
- Military service
- Personal references. You must provide contact information for six character references.

MATTERS OF INTEREST TO CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

- School Discipline (including suspension, expulsion, adjustment of grade, community service, or any written notice of reprimand or warning)
- Civil litigation (including divorce or class action suits, evictions, small claims suits)
- Bankruptcy filings
- Compliance with court orders (child support, judgments)
- Past-due child support
- Significant past-due debt (\$50,000 past due or more)
- Professional discipline
- Contempt of court

MATTERS OF INTEREST TO CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

- UPL (unauthorized practice of law)
- Failure to timely file or timely pay state or federal income taxes
- Failure to timely file and pay payroll taxes
- Non-disclosure of required matters to your law school or the Board of Law Examiners
- Dishonesty or lack of candor in answers
- Criminal history (see next slides)

CRIMINAL HISTORY

Read the questions carefully.

- 6.1: Have you **ever** been convicted of an offense, placed on probation, or granted deferred adjudication or any type of pretrial diversion?
- 6.2: Have you, **within the last 10 years**, been arrested, cited or ticketed for, or charged with any violation of the law?
- The full text of the questions appears on the Declaration.
- Exercise due diligence. Check with courts, arresting agencies, parents.

CRIMINAL HISTORY

- Offenses involving alcohol and/or drugs must be included.
- Class C misdemeanor traffic violations should be omitted.
- Failure to Appear and Failure to Maintain Financial Responsibility ("No Insurance") are not considered to be minor traffic violations and must be disclosed.
- Visit www.texasfailuretoappear.com, a DPS website, to determine if you may have had any Failures to Appear.

CRIMINAL HISTORY

- Expunged or sealed charges **must not** be disclosed. Ensure the charge was expunged or sealed. If you disclose expunged or sealed offenses, you will be asked to remove them.
- If you disclosed expunged or sealed charges on your law school application, you must redact them from your law school application before providing us with a copy.
- Offenses under an Order of Non-Disclosure **must not** be disclosed, but the Board may consider such offenses.
- For felony criminal history, see Rule 4 for more information, and contact the Director of Investigations with questions.

AMENDING YOUR LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION

- You may need to amend your law school application to include information about your criminal history or school disciplinary history. Take action as soon as possible to correct any deficiencies.
- Your law school may have already provided you with instructions on how to amend your law school application.
- Board staff may also direct you to amend your law school application.
- Provide us with a copy of your amendment and the law school's response.

AMENDING YOUR DECLARATION

- You may need to amend your Declaration if there is anything you omitted that must be disclosed.
- -Board staff may direct you to amend your Declaration.
- -You should also update your Declaration with any new information.

- Click [Amend Application](#)
- Amend the correct section.
- Click [Submit Amendment](#)

FITNESS

- Fitness is the assessment of mental and emotional health as it affects the competence of a prospective lawyer.
- The fitness required is **present** fitness.
- The purpose of this inquiry is to exclude persons with a mental or emotional illness or condition which would be likely to prevent the person from carrying out duties to clients, courts, or the profession.
- The likelihood is determined by acts of misconduct that are related to the mental illness or condition and not the diagnosis alone.

FITNESS QUESTIONS

- **7.1 Conduct or Behavior**
- **Within the past 5 years, have you exhibited any conduct or behavior that could call into question your ability to practice law in a competent, ethical, and professional manner?**

- **7.2 Mitigation**
- The purpose of this inquiry is to determine the current fitness of an applicant to practice law. The mere fact of treatment, monitoring, or participation in a support group is not, in itself, a basis on which admission is denied; the Board of Law Examiners encourages applicants who may benefit from assistance to seek it.
- **Within the past 5 years, have you asserted any condition or impairment as a defense, in mitigation, or as an explanation for your conduct in the course of any inquiry, investigation, or administrative or judicial proceeding by an educational institution, governmental agency, professional organization, or licensing authority; or in connection with an unemployment claim, employer discipline, or termination procedure?**

PROCESSING THE DECLARATION

- Once you submit your Declaration, you will receive an acknowledgement through ATLAS.
- You will receive regular Status Letters at least every 60 days.
- Investigation requires up to 270 days (9 months.)
- Your analyst will review your Declaration and send you Missing Item Notices.
- Make sure you log into your ATLAS account **at least monthly** to be sure you do not fail to respond to any requests for information.
- **Add noreply@ble.Texas.gov as a safe sender.**
- If you fail to respond to our requests for information, we may assess an additional \$75 incomplete fee and your Declaration may be terminated.

UPDATING THE DECLARATION

- When you complete your Declaration, you will certify that the information you disclosed is correct. You will also acknowledge your obligation to update your responses whenever there is an addition or a change to the information provided.
- Contact information
- New arrests
- New school discipline
- Any other additions or changes to the information

END OF INVESTIGATION

- At the end of the investigation, Board staff may issue a preliminary certification of your character and fitness. In this case, a notification will appear on your ATLAS homepage indicating your character and fitness has been approved.
- A negative preliminary determination letter (PDL) may be issued if significant issues of concern to the Board were identified during our investigation.
- A hearing on a PDL may be held if requested within 30 days, or you may be able to complete curative measures and avoid a hearing.

GOOD LUCK IN LAW SCHOOL!
CONTACT US WITH QUESTIONS.

ZOOM "OFFICE HOURS"

INFORMATION@BLE.TEXAS.GOV

WWW.BLE.TEXAS.GOV

